

# GLORIA'S ROMANCE

By MR. and MRS. RUPERT HUGHES

Novelized from the Motion Picture Romance of the same name.



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## ELEVENTH INSTALLMENT

### SYNOPSIS.

Pierpont Stafford, with his sixteen-year-old daughter, Gloria, is wintering at Palm Beach. Gloria is a vivacious but willful young lady who chafes under the restraining hand of a governess from whom she repeatedly escapes. Her childish capers cause young Doctor Royce to fall in love with her. Becoming lost in the everglades she falls into the hands of the Seminole Indians. She is rescued and returned to her father who had offered a reward for her return. Gloria falls in love with her rescuer, Freneau. Five years later she leaves school and meets Freneau at the theater; he has forgotten Gloria. Gloria feels that her one dream is shattered. Later Freneau persuades her to forgive him. Gloria's sister-in-law, Lois, becomes intensely jealous and Doctor Royce discovers in her an ally. Doctor Royce warns Freneau. Freneau goes sleighing with Gloria without her father's knowledge. It results in pneumonia for Gloria, whose family becomes incensed at Freneau when they learn the truth. Royce is summoned to alleviate Gloria's suffering. Freneau's finances being low he approaches Pierpont Stafford for a loan. Doctor Royce again warns Freneau of his conduct. But Lois, learning of Freneau's betrothal to Gloria, threatens him with dire punishment. Her husband, Gloria's brother David, becomes suspicious. Freneau driven to desperation by Lois' threats agrees to spend a week with her in the Catskills. He plans to have Mulry send Gloria a bunch of telegrams. Lois' husband threatens to kill a man. After Freneau takes leave of Gloria she sees from a distance an attack made upon him. She replies but her telegrams are returned. The first morning she is allowed from her room, she accidentally sees the supposed suicide of Freneau reported in the paper. Then Gloria swears to find the murderer of her lover. Royce becomes alarmed and tells what he knows of Freneau to Mr. Stafford. Together they seek to prevent scandal from enveloping Gloria. She accuses them in her mind of conspiracy against her. Gloria sets about to run down Freneau's murderer. Royce warns Mulry to tell Gloria nothing. Gloria calls on Mulry and there sees Lois who also is worried. Gloria's suspicions are aroused. Royce endeavors to show her the difficulty she faces.

### THE FUGITIVE WITNESS

Aroused from its winter sleep, David's country house was aglow with good cheer. Gloria, her father, Doctor Royce, and David and Lois had come up to play for a little, to throw off the family tragedy and the formal duties of their city life, and to forget them boisterously in the open.

For men and women resting in the shadow of a crime they behaved strangely like children turned out in the yard to play after a rainy day's imprisonment. They ran through the house shouting hilariously to one another as they found their skates and wraps for a trip to the frozen swimming pool. The dogs added greatly to the excitement by loud barking of "Come on out!" and by a remarkable gift for getting in the way.

No one played harder than Gloria. She was trying to convince the others that she had put the mourning off her mind as well as her body. She wanted to find out what her people were concealing from her, and why.

The Stafford family lark was soon invaded by neighbors. A tobogganing party from another country house appeared. There were no invitations or only mumbled words, for ceremony had no place among flying snowballs, and dignity could not be kept up after a bump on the ice.

Gloria found herself the victim of the attentions of a large, jovial man whose playfulness was a little too heavy for her liking. She was about to snub him when someone casually alluded to him as Frank Mulry.

Gloria staggered in the snow at meeting thus by chance the man she had tried in vain to overtake in town. Mulry, never imagining who she was, thought she had slipped on the icy snow; he put out his hand to help her. Mulry was always ready for any emergency; preparedness was Mulry's motto.

It took him a moment. This was the part of the murdered lover! He was too amiable of a creature of such a crime. She acquiesced in going to do away with Freneau. In fact, she said that Freneau's death had nearly ruined her firm. Mulry did not look bankrupt. He did not know that her father had given a money to Freneau a few days before that Mulry was living on that.

As a shifty flippancy in Mulry's eyes and that made Gloria distrust him. She felt that she had been deceived by her dead lover for having taken him as a partner. The hateful proverb about a feather ran through her mind like a red-hot iron. Here at last was the man she had suspected. She was impatient to question him. There were too many people on the crest of the hill to permit of conversation there. So she dared not ask him a toboggan ride.

She accepted. She got aboard and he steered. She swooped like a descending airship. But at the foot of the hill the toboggan careened and slid them deep into the drift before it capsized.

Mulry, for all his bulk, was agile and he was soon helping Gloria to her feet.

"Thank you a million times, Mr. Mulry," she said.

He beamed and congratulated himself on making such success with this pretty creature. He had not recognized her. He had seen photographs of her in Freneau's possession and he had seen her at the opera. But she was disguised to him now by her close-fitting cap, her rough sports suit, and, most of all, by her coquettish smiles. Suddenly he had to leap for his life to escape another scolding toboggan. On it were David and Lois and a young man from the same house party of which Mulry was a member.

"Hurt yourself, Gloria?" David sang out.

"Did you get hurt, Miss Stafford?" the other young man cried.

Gloria shook her head and called after them, not noticing that Mulry's eyes were popping and his jaw drooping. He had placed the name together. "Gloria Stafford!" He had come up here to escape her and he had just coasted down the hill with her, and she knew his name! He remembered Doctor Royce's warning of the danger of meeting Gloria face to face.

He pretended to be suddenly ill. He begged Gloria's pardon and said that he must go home. He was too big for Gloria to hold and she could not run after him without attracting attention. She stood bewildered while he got away.

Later she telephoned to his host and asked to speak to him. She learned that he had just taken a motor to the train.

Gloria forgot her suspicions of Lois in her newer suspicions of this man Mulry. He was evidently running away from her. Therefore she must pursue him. His flight was evidence of some mysterious guilt.

Gloria cut short her visit to the country and announced her intention of going back to town at once. Her father and her brother were used to her whims

and did not oppose them nowadays out of pity for her.

The next morning Gloria made another journey to Mulry's office. She went early to make sure of catching him within business hours. The stenographer told her that Mr. Mulry had gone to Palm Beach the night before with a rich client who had invited him to be his guest.

Gloria was furious at this new escape. She pondered it all the way home. When she saw her father she told him that he was not looking at all well; he needed some golf and surf bathing. He ought to go to Palm Beach. He accepted the suggestion heartily. He was more than willing to undertake the golf and he was eager to get Gloria out of the region of her sorrow. He was so worried over her swift alternation of gloom and gaiety that he invited Doctor Royce to come along as a member of the family party. He did not have to ask Royce twice.

Gloria had not been to Florida during the last five years. To her it was not so much a flight from her romance as a return to its birthplace. It was at Palm Beach that she had met her fate. It was there that she had made her girlish escapade in David's racing car, and wrecked it in the everglades. It was there that she had wandered into

umph, only to find himself in a tangle of pedestrians. His one-darkey power machine began to feel the effects of his bulky cargo. Mulry applied gasoline in the form of a dollar bill brandished in front of popping, white eyeballs, and that gave him the advantage for a time. But even money cannot furnish everlasting power, and the heavy breathing back of him told Mulry that his engine was about to die.

He looked back and saw that Gloria's car had taken a wrong turn and shot down another avenue. He gave three silent cheers for himself.

Thus ended one of the most blood-curdling rolling-chariot races since Ben Hur's day. Mulry paid his exhausted man well and took the nearest way to the cottage where he was guest. He did not leave it that night, and it was well, for Gloria hunted for him everywhere.

She would not dance, though many asked her. The music hurt her cruelly. She remembered how she had wanted to dance that moonlit night so long ago, but had been put to bed by her heartless governess. She remembered how she had suffered till she could bear it no longer, and had risen to dress in the dark and steal out, leaving her governess a-snore.

She had envied David his liberty and had stolen the car that David brought round so that he might

ery and the ugly look it would have in court. He beat his fat head for some clever lie that would explain everything gracefully, but no inspiration came and he went to bed like a spanked and supperless child.

The next morning Mulry looked out late upon the flood of sunlight gilding the liquid emerald sea. The breakers called to him. He could not resist the summons. He stole down a corridor and along an unfrequented walk to a bathhouse. He unpeeled his clothes and squeezed into a bathing suit and so made into the ocean. Friends of his loitering on the beach said that the water rose when he went in and fell when he came out. But Mulry was happy. He wallowed and dived like a porpoise till he was blissfully weary, then he stretched himself on the sand for an Oriental snooze.

He heard a voice that sounded familiar. He sat up. Gloria was coming along the beach directly toward him. In her sea clothes she was the approval of all eyes except Mulry's. He did not make the mistake of the ostrich. He buried his entire self in the sand and tried to hold his breath till Gloria got past. Luck was against him and she casually stepped on him as she crossed his equator.

When she had gone, he exhumed himself hastily and made for the water to clear off the sand that

bent to the oars; the shallop slipped across the waves and Royce plunged in and swam with all his might, diving through the white caps, cresting the big rollers. The life-saver checked his boat alongside Mulry, took him from Gloria, hauled him over the stern seat, and left him face down, heels in air, while he offered his hand to Gloria. Gloria shook her head. She felt better for having saved a life. She underestimated the distance to shore. She ordered the life-saver to make haste with Mulry.

"Take good care of him," she shouted. "He belongs to me."

The life-saver thought she meant that he was her husband.

Gloria felt lonely and afraid when the boat was gone. She wondered if she could make the land. She did not really care, her life was too sad. She was beginning to droop and fall when Royce appeared at her side and set her hands of his strong shoulders. She liked him better than she thought she did. He swam magnificently. He saved her and she was glad to be saved.

When at last she staggered ashore and her father embraced her, wet as she was, she looked about for Mulry. He was gone. The life-saver had revived him and he had tottered away.

Gloria did not know whom he was visiting. He was not in the hotel registers. She did not know that he had gone to his friend's cottage, slammed his clothes in his trunk and suitcase, and returned North.

One of the picturesque features of Palm Beach life is the presence now and then of Seminole Indians, who come up from the everglades to sell baskets and other samples of their craft, rattlesnake skins, and trinkets of various sorts. Among those who stood offering bargains of the sort were the young chief who wanted to marry Gloria and the old squaw whose horse Gloria had tried to steal. They recognized her when they saw her wandering slowly along, scanning the crowds for Mulry.

Gloria paused and stared at them. She did not recognize them at first and stopped to price a souvenir of her captivity. But she noted the wild glare in the eye of the romantic peddler and suddenly remembered her swarthy suitor of five years ago. Her old fear came back to her for the moment. She started to escape. The chief clutched her hand and compelled her to pause. She was hardly reassured by his soft words.

"Don't be 'fraid. Nice squaw, nice squaw."

She could think of nothing to say. He did the talking.

"Many years since squaw run off. You got husband yet?"

Gloria shook her head and sighed. The chief sighed, too—with relief. He spoke grandiosely. "All right. You marry me now?"

Gloria was almost as much embarrassed by this second proposal in the Polciana gardens as she had been by the first in the everglades. She could not imagine what to say. The chief crowded closer to her. Suddenly his face hardened and he looked past her. He clenched his fists and reached for a knife. Gloria followed his eyes and saw Doctor Royce in the distance. She wondered why the chief should hate him. The chief explained with a dog's snarl.

"That man nearly kill me once. He take you from me."

Gloria pointed to Royce questioning. The chief nodded. Gloria protested. She could not permit the glory of her rescue to be taken from her dead love. "No, no, it wasn't that man. It was this one," she cried, and caught from her gown a little portrait of Freneau in a locket.

The chief clutched it and looked hard. The chief's lip curls with scorn. He laughed—almost.

"Him? Humph! Him white liver! Him run! That man there hand me big wallop. Ugh!" Gloria was indignant. The chief described with vivid pantomime and guttural words the true history of her rescue, his own proposal of marriage, Gloria's swooning with terror. Freneau's arrival, his terrified retreat before the chief's advance. The struggle for the chief's knife, and finally the tremendous uppercut that had knocked the chief. Meanwhile, during the fight, he had caught glimpses of Freneau's hasty gathering up of Gloria and his escape with her, leaving Royce to his fate.

Gloria was aghast at the story. As the chief went on with it Royce snatched up and paused. The chief turned on him and was about to attack him. Royce fell into an attitude of self-defense, but smiled and spoke soothingly and put out his hand. The chief took it. He was a good sportsman and so was Royce.

Gloria looked from Royce to the picture of Freneau in her locket. A terrible doubt of Freneau assailed her. She seized Royce by the arm and dragged him to one side, demanding:

"It was you that saved me. Why didn't you tell me?"

Royce looked sheepish and shrugged his shoulders. He did not know just what to say. Gloria looked at the locket with hideous new suspicion, then turned and hurried away with tears springing to her eyelids.

Royce stared after her adoringly.

Gloria wandered far down the beach alone. She was in a hopeless frame of mind. She dropped to the sand brooding over the crumbling of her hero's glory. From the sea the ghost of Freneau seemed to come to her and, kneeling by her, take her in his arms. She thrust him away, crying:

"Coward! Cad! Liar!"

Royce, coming along the beach, found her. He knelt down at her side. Gloria turned to him with the old question:

"Why didn't you tell me that it was you who saved me, and not Dick?"

Royce gazed into her sad eyes pityingly. He was unable to deal the death blow to her trust in her dead lover. He spoke gently.

"It was Freneau that found you and saved you. I arrived a little too late, and I simply held off the Indian chief while Freneau made sure of your safety."

Gloria studied him with a longing to believe in Freneau. He did not flinch. She thanked him and he rose sadly and walked away. He had lied to her because he loved her. But his heart was almost bursting with protest against the sacrifice. When he had gone, Gloria put out her arms to the sea, crying:

"Dick, Dick, forgive my suspicions and come back to me!"

From the waves Freneau seemed to come forth again and, sitting down beside her, take her in his arms. She wept, then rose and accompanied by his ghost, moved slowly and sadly along the beach.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



- (1)—Spoke Soothingly and Put Out His Hand.
- (2)—Gloria Announced Her Intention of Going Back to Town.
- (3)—She Caught Sight of Frank Mulry.
- (4)—Tells Her Father He Ought to Go to Palm Beach.
- (5)—This Was the Partner of Her Murdered Lover.

the heart of the wilderness and into the heart of the young Seminole chief who would have forced her to be his squaw, if her brave Freneau had not rescued her from him. And now her lover, who had escaped the dangers of the jungle, had been slain on Riverside drive; her romance had ended in vanity and despair.

She found the pleasure paradise almost the same. A little more gorgeous, perhaps, but all the gloomier for that. She had come from the white winter of the North into the sudden July of Florida, and her heart ached anew remembering how love had bloomed in her life under the tropical sun of Freneau's eyes. It was like going over an old album of souvenirs to revisit the scenes of that far-off yesterday. The same throngs seemed to be dancing the same dances, bounding through the same waves, still slipping their tea under the palms in the royal gardens of the Polciana.

She had almost forgotten her purpose in coming here when she caught sight of Frank Mulry's broad back. He was rolling along briskly. She did not know that he had caught sight of her and had made off in disgust and amazement at her discovery of his new retreat.

She dared not run after him and she could not keep pace with him. She lost him in the maze of the bazaars. Later she saw him riding in one of the rolling chairs propelled by darkeys on wheels—the familiar "afromobiles" of Palm Beach.

Poor Mulry was winded by his speed and he wanted to get to his host's cottage. But he caught a glimpse of Gloria, also chartering an afromobile. To his horror her afromobile made after him. He dared not put back to his hotel. He ordered his driver to turn down a bowered path and to give him all the steam the blacks could afford.

The motorman was vigorous, but the passenger was weak. Gloria was light, but her African was weak. It was anybody's race with every prospect of a spill for one jockey or the other, since the paths were filled with dawdling strollers and the bicycle had come back into fashion. Everywhere women in exquisite dresses were roving about on pedals. Dozens of other afromobiles also clattered the race course. Now, Gloria gazed and was about to head off her man, when a messenger boy on a wheel cut in ahead and it was necessary for Gloria's chauffeur to back pedal wildly or endure collision.

Mulry would shoot ahead and rejoice at his tri-



take Judge Freeman's daughter Lois for a moonlight spin—and spoon. Gloria had not prevented David from marrying Lois, and she had run herself into a series of adventures that had promised everything wonderful only to stop short in black disaster. Her poor, brave, patient lover would dance no more, smile at her no more. Love was gone from her life already and she was only twenty.

Frank Mulry did not dance that night, either. He sat at his window, listening to the music and wondering how long this game of hide and seek would last. He was tempted to go out and surrender to this young girl who was stalking him with such relentless stealth.

But he thought of the money her father had given to Freneau and he was afraid he would have to give it up. He thought of his share in Freneau's trick-

loaded him. Just as he set his toe in the first froth, Gloria sighted him. He could tell by her start that she recognized him. He ran into the waves, she followed. He dived through the first breaker and a second and a third. When he looked back she was not to be seen. He laughed and began to float—which was the easiest thing he did. Suddenly he saw a red turban come through the wall of a big billow. Under it appeared Gloria's face. Mulry struck out to sea. Gloria came crawling after. He was astonished to see how well she swam. But he swam well, too.

He wondered if he would have to cross the Atlantic and he regretted the necessity of landing in Europe with his bathing suit and nothing else. He was still at some distance from Europe when he suddenly felt a twinge of pain in his ankle—then in his knee—in both knees. He was doubling up with cramp! He knew real fear now. He looked back to shore and the far-off, misty crowd. He shouted for help. Nobody heard him except Gloria, and he placed no reliance in her.

She called to him, but he was past answering. Gloria had been raised an athlete and her brother David had taught her how to rescue drowning people. But her first practical demonstration alarmed her. She had not counted on so huge a barge to take in tow.

She set up a cry to shore. No one heard her. No one missed her except one man. Doctor Royce was looking for her. That was not strange. He was almost always looking for her or at her. Pierpont did not know where she was. David and Lois had no idea of her whereabouts. She was not among the crowds on the beach.

Royce stared out into the farther waters. He saw her turban—or at least he was afraid that it was hers. He saw her put up her hand, though he could not hear her cry.

He howled to the life-saver in the boat and pointed to where Gloria swam with one hand, the other clutching at Mulry's collar. The life-saver